

# THE MONTHLY RECORD

October 2008

£1.25



## REACHING STUDENTS

Mark Ellis | NHS Chaplaincy | Dingwall Rebuilt | Outreach Support

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**Welcome to the October Record**

This month our theme is **Reaching Students**. Around 50% of young people in Britain will go to university or college. Although a particular congregation may not be a “student” one, it is still the case that very few congregations will not have someone attending or leaving for university or college. Therefore it is imperative that we support and encourage the work of people such as Mark Ellis, the team leader for UCCF (Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship) and Jonathan Worthington (student worker in Aberdeen Free Church). Recently UCCF held a student leaders’ weeklong conference called Forum, where almost 1000 Christian student leaders met to hear speakers like John Piper. By all accounts it was an outstanding, if somewhat wet, week, with great biblical teaching, good Christ-centred worship, and excellent leadership training. Does it not thrill you to know that these 1,000 young men and women are this month serving Christ in their various universities throughout the land?! And is it not encouraging that Free Churches such as Aberdeen, Buccleuch, St Columba’s, St Andrews, Downvale, St Vincent Street and St Peter’s, Dundee, all have significant numbers of students, both national and international?

Also this month, we have a report on Fairtrade, news of the Nairn induction, Principal Boyd’s obituary, Robert Macleod tells us of the importance of chaplaincy work, Michelle MacDonald informs us about the work of the Outreach Support group, and Michael Braeutigam writes about what he, as a German pastor, learned from the Free Church; all this in addition to Jenny Wilson, Carl Trueman and From the Frontiers with news of Ronnie Christie, Peru and the WFM in Stornoway. And in Feedback, Carl Trueman, Sandy Finlayson and Iain D. Campbell respond to last month’s letters. It is good to have these discussions about such an important matter conducted in this manner in the *Record*.

**Lakeland “Revival” collapses**

As we went to press last month with our critique of the Lakeland “revival”, little did we know that the whole farce was already unravelling. The leader of the “revival”, Todd Bentley, has been compelled to resign because of the break-up of his marriage due to his “inappropriate relationship” with a female member of his staff, and further accusations of periodic drunkenness. Whilst it is always sad to hear of such things, it is certainly not surprising. What is surprising is that God TV and others are continuing to defend the movement as “of God” and they have urged all Christians not to rush to judgement. Do they really believe that God was telling Mr Bentley to kick people in the face, amongst other “manifestations”, whilst he was deliberately continuing to ignore the fruit of that same Spirit and the Word of that same Spirit? As for judging, have they never read the inspired words of Paul? ‘What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? (1 Corinthians 5:12)’. If there had been a little more discernment and judgement about the showmanship, unbiblical doctrine and sheer weirdness of Lakeland, we would never have reached this stage. Although Todd Bentley is gone from the scene, it is certain that there will be others, and gullible Christians will still waste their time, money and energy, not in seeking the lost, but rather seeking “the transferable anointing”. The show must go on. Even as I am writing this,

I am watching God TV tell us that people were ‘so drunk in the Spirit that they needed designated drivers to go home’. It is precisely when our young people are assailed by such stupidity and heresy that we should be thankful for UCCF and the excellent work they do in preparing our youth to be the real church in the real world.

**Coming up in November**

We hope to look at the Church in the Highlands, a review of the latest biography of Francis Schaeffer, Climate Change, the significance of John Owen, and much more. If you have any comments or feedback on anything in this month’s edition, then please put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard ASAP, and we will do our best to allow you to make your contribution. Likewise, we are trying to have a theme to every *Record*; if you have any suggestions for future themes, again please feel free to contact us. It’s your *Record*. In that respect, can I suggest that you take the opportunity to introduce the *Record* to others. It is a good opportunity to let people know something of the Free Church, rather than the caricature that is still so prevalent. Read, enjoy and pass on.

**David**

**Fundraising Gig and CD Launch**

When Alex MacDonald and his sons Doug and Rob heard that Kirkcaldy Free Church were appealing for funds to extend their building for community outreach work, they decided to help out by putting on a fundraiser which would also launch a CD of Alex’s songs which they have been working on.

**Venue:** Buccleuch Free Church, Edinburgh

**Date:** 4 October 2008

**Time:** 7:30pm

**Entry:** £5 (all proceeds to Kirkcaldy appeal - tickets will be available beforehand and also on the night)



*Like the River* CD will be available on the night, price £10. The CD is also available from the Free Church Bookshop or online at [www.alexjmacdonald.co.uk](http://www.alexjmacdonald.co.uk), where you can also hear clips and get more info.

# Today's Challenges for Today's Students

*Perhaps you've spotted them? They move in herds and hover near the watering holes and biscuits at the back of church. Sometimes you get one on its own, and when you speak to it, you realise university life today is not like it used to be. And students are not who they used to be either. **Mark Ellis** (Scotland Team Leader for UCCF) tells us more ...*



## Who are students today?

Universities today are run more like businesses than ever before. The government has set a target of getting 50% of young people into further education by 2010. As a result, undergraduate numbers have almost doubled in the past ten years.

But government funding has not kept pace with this influx of warm bodies. Increasingly, the result is that universities must be profit-driven. Young undergraduates are less important. There's a *pile 'em high and stack 'em deep* mentality with bigger and bigger class sizes, and with students receiving less and less personal attention. As a student today, you accept that you *are* just a number.

Changes in government funding don't just affect the universities, they also affect individuals. Student debt has soared. According to the Student Loans Company, average student debt is now three times the level it was a decade ago; most can expect to graduate with debts in excess of £10,000. Increasingly students juggle their diaries with part-time jobs or stay at home with their parents to survive financially.

But staying at home isn't always easy either. Families today are messier than they used to be. The rise in divorce rates and family breakdowns means many seventeen- or eighteen-year-olds, as they move to university and try to work out who they are, no longer come from secure, stable homes. And it's not just complicated home life that causes difficulties for



*Students today face greater stress than ever before*

today's students in working through their identity. Gender confusion is widespread, and basic moral values seem to be up for grabs.

All these, together with the pressure to compete academically and pessimism about careers and job fulfilment, mean that students today face greater stress than ever before. So, many students cope by escaping. Sociologists talk of young people in Britain being younger than they used to be. They defer maturity and extend their adolescence. Many students emotionally and practically lack straightforward life-skills and an ability to organise themselves for their studies or live independently. More students. More debt. More mess. More stress. Student life today is not what it used to be.

## Who are Christian students today?

And Christian students are caught up in the same environment. They face all the above pressures, but with some distinctive extras.

For example, our universities today are a curious mix of modernist certainties and a post-modern distrust of certainty. Militant atheists show that modern rationalism is alive and well, and happy to run roughshod over every other viewpoint. So when Christian students hold a debate about "science and Christianity", it is normally guaranteed a robust set of enlightened hecklers.

**More students. More debt. More mess. More stress. Student life today is not what it used to be.**

On the other hand, most lecturers, textbooks, and coffee table discussions see truth as merely a personal opinion. As the reader, you have the authority to "deconstruct" the author's point of view and come up with your own interpretation. So any Christian students who try to live with reference to the Bible, and God's Word as "truth", find themselves ridiculed. Arts students seem acutely on the front line here, as their work is so closely tied in with who they are and what they believe. And their lecturers seem particularly keen to undermine their trust in the one true God.

Christian students today increasingly find themselves labelled "fundamentalist". They are not merely sidelined for being quaint; they are looked on with suspicion for holding dangerously intolerant views. Christians are a menace, a threat. So when you live in this environment every day, it is

almost natural for a distrust of God's Word to seep under your skin. Because they have less conviction in the sufficiency and dependability of God's Word, Christian students today are more adrift spiritually than ever before. Being less well grounded and less well taught, Christian students are less spiritually mature than they used to be.

And our churches aren't helping. I think fewer than ever before in Scotland are teaching and preparing their youth groups to read, understand and trust the Bible for themselves. As a result, many school leavers have only a very shaky grasp of the gospel of grace, of who Christ is, and of what the cross achieved for them. So it's not surprising that when they are let loose at 18, many fade away because they don't have roots in good soil. They don't grasp the centre of gospel, of Christ crucified and His free grace poured out. And they fail to understand the sum of the gospel, the Lordship of Christ over everything in all creation.

And yet, it is a thrill to see Christian students taking a stand and seeking to live and speak for Jesus. Every week, in every university in Scotland, Christian Unions meet so that students can be discipled and grow, and so that they can reach out to their peers. Often with considerable personal courage and in the face of apathy or antagonism, they are trying to speak with friends or run events that do proclaim God's truth.

Our Christian Unions unite students from all denominations on the primary truths of the gospel. The task is urgent and vital. We need as many as will put their hands to the plough to build a mission-team on campus. We need to reach out to as many as possible, as much as possible. And student days are a great time to do this. But please pray: Scotland does seem to be very hard ground spiritually these days.

### **What can you do?**

So where do you and I come in?

Today's students crave community. They want to belong, to be part of something. They need to be valued as individuals. Despite appearances, most don't want merely to clump together in yet another student environment when they come to your church. Anyway, the church family should be about all ages and backgrounds being united around the gospel. So it may take you some courage to go up to them and break into their conversations, but please just do it! Make students feel part of the normal life of your fellowship, not as if you and they are two inward-facing people-groups that orbit around each other like planets.

Invite students back to your own homes. I'm amazed at how few students, even Christian ones in "good" churches, ever get invited into someone's home during term time. And they're easy to please! We've had students excited simply to be able to sink into a sofa, or to enjoy the fire going during the winter. Spend time with them. Feed them. Some of this is not rocket science!

Many students are also looking for older role models to learn from and will respond eagerly to having the chance to learn from you. Talk about how you apply the Bible's truth and live out your Christian life. Ask students questions. Invite one to read the Bible with you for an hour weekly or fortnightly for a semester. A book like *One to One*, by Sophie De Witt,



*Most students don't want to just clump together*

helps show how possible this is. If a fraction of our Christian students were being mentored and discipled in this way by older Christians, it would make a massive difference to our Christian Unions, and when the students graduate, to the Church in Scotland.

And whether or not you have students studying where you live, you can pray for them. Over the years, Christian students who have been active on campus have gone on to become church leaders in the future. Pray that from today's students, God would raise up a whole new generation of passionate, gospel-centred leaders for the Scottish Church: people who know and love Christ and are able to teach God's truth to the next generation.

Pray that Christian students today would build a solid foundation for lifelong discipleship. Most will go on to the kinds of normal jobs most of us do, and have the potential to impact Scottish society. Pray they would develop an enquiring, Christian mind that will help them be a salty Christian and real witness wherever God places them.

And pray for the hundreds of thousands of students in Scotland who do not yet know Christ. Pray for the antagonistic who have been hurt; for the apathetic who have been inoculated by a taste of religion and churchianity; for the increasing numbers of ignorant students who haven't a clue what Christianity is. And pray that Christian students would be bold in living and speaking for Jesus on campus. Finally, please pray for us. Pray for the UCCF team who seek to support and help students run the Christian Unions. And pray for the many other student ministry organisations and church-based student workers, that we would all model Christ faithfully from His word and in our lives.

These sites are provided by UCCF as a resource for all Christians, not just students. Each has a vast range of articles at different levels from beginner to more advanced.

**[www.bethinking.org](http://www.bethinking.org)** – answering tough questions, engaging with culture

**[www.theologynetwork.org](http://www.theologynetwork.org)** – knowing God better, loving Jesus more

# In the Beginning God Created Students



**Jonathan Worthington** is the youth/student worker in Bon Accord Free Church, Aberdeen.

In the beginning God created students. Okay, maybe there wasn't exactly a University of Eden. But the first thing Adam did after being formed was to go on placement. God's primary task for Adam and Eve was to listen to the great Teacher and to go get their hands dirty putting it into practice. There was even an exam at the end! Students have a unique glimpse into the original, and continual, desires of God for humanity - for us. *Listen* to the Teacher, *Learn* it all, and *Do* it with vigour.

So what are we doing with the Aberdeen students to encourage these designs? They want to listen, so we sprinkle teaching into their lives. But teaching has many faces. There are occasional book studies, with guys on one side, gals on the other - so they can talk about the particulars. There is YF, where we recently worked through Proverbs. We're on

to characters from Judges this term. (Yep, obese kings on the toilet, tent pegs, concubines, and all!) The students must also get rooted in the church. Is there anything *you* can do to appropriately attract young believers and their friends to your churches, and then "keep" them?

They want to learn, and not simply be spoken *at*, so discussion is vital. They love coffee. (Well, some like Red Bull, or perhaps another drink that forces the eyelids open after only four hours of sleep ... at 10:00 in the morning!) So we have a weekly coffee time at each campus. The students can take a break from their studies and have a chat. Can someone truly learn if he or she can never ask those burning questions, raise those deep objections, and try out those not-quite-thought-through-but-there-nonetheless-in-seed-form theories? And who says you can't talk about Jesus, temptation, politics, pews, movies, Uganda, PowerPoint in church, morality, spiritual gifts, etc., on campus?

**Is there anything *you* can do to appropriately attract young believers and their friends to your churches, and then "keep" them?**

And they want to *do*, so we are attempting to put feet on their theories. This is where I have personally failed the most. These students are tired of *talking* about evangelism and service, and ready to do it. Let's give 'em the chance. Let's no longer simply say, "Okay, that's nice; you go ahead and do it then". Rather we ourselves must be their practical impetus.

But why? Why students? Because they are "the generation of tomorrow"? Well, if Jesus returns this evening, then tomorrow will not exactly look like we envision it. It is because their minds and hearts are fertile *now*. Students are movers and shakers. But because they are also being moved and shaken by secular teaching and lifestyles from all sides, they need us to *listen with them*, *learn with them*, and *do with them* what the Lord Jesus plans to move and shake. Would that we all mimic the students in this way, no matter where we are in life! Jesus teaches, "Not only hear, *Listen!*" If we had anything "figured out" already ... well, we'd be God. We harvest blasphemy in our hearts by not *learning*. We disobey him by not *doing*. Remember, from the beginning God designed and desired people to Listen, Learn, and Do. Let us join the students.



Can someone truly learn if he or she can never ask those burning questions?

# Fairtrade for Fair Trade



*This is a summary of a Public Questions report by Alan J F Fraser. The full report can be obtained in booklet format from the Free Church Offices or it can be downloaded from the Free Church website.*

## Introduction

One in every two children alive today lives in poverty. One billion people live on less than \$1 a day. Since 1990, around 270 million people have died from poverty-related causes. Nine out of ten Christians live in poverty. The statistics could be multiplied till they no longer made any impact as we become paralysed by the sheer enormity of the problem. Yet behind these statistics are real people, mothers and babies, brothers and sisters, grandparents and grandchildren. The same nervous system responds to pain in them as in us. They share the common human desire to live and to keep their loved ones alive.

But is the problem not so large it becomes pointless even to attempt to do something about it? The answer is a resounding "NO!" for three reasons. Firstly, our God has revealed himself as the God of the poor, the one who cares for them and is concerned by their plight. We must share that concern if we are not to come under His judgement for our callousness. Secondly, various organisations are making a difference. One such is Fairtrade, which is the subject of this report. Thirdly, we ought to cultivate the mindset of the little boy who was walking along a beach strewn with thousands of starfish thrown up by a storm. He was throwing what he could back into the sea, one by one. An adult passing by remarked that there were so many starfish he could not possibly make a

difference by rescuing so few. The little boy stooped down and picked up yet another starfish and, as he threw it back into the sea, said, 'I can make a difference to this one.'

The causes of poverty are multiple, but are mostly linked to man's greed or indifference. Most poverty is caused by war or unjust trade. Even climate change, a recent major player in this area, has a real dimension of human greed attached to it. This report focuses on the specific issue of trade.

But first, we need to look at the Biblical teaching on the subject of poverty.

## Biblical Teaching

The Bible is full of teaching on the poor, God's concern for the poor, and our obligations to the poor.

The Pentateuch contains much enlightening material in the laws given to Israel at Sinai that were to govern their social structure. We have the provisions made for the poor in the Year of Jubilee, Gleaning, and even Slavery (Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 15 & 24:19-22). Gleaning is beautifully illustrated for us in the story of Ruth. There it was no cold charity nor legalistic provision for accruing merit, but an expression of true compassion for the poor as encouraged in the law: '...you shall open your hand to him (i.e. your poor brother)' (Deuteronomy 15:8).

The wisdom literature continues the injunction 'to defend the rights of the poor and needy' with a stark judgement that any who 'oppresses the poor shows contempt for their maker' (Proverbs 14:31 & 29:7). One of the strongest expressions of this is given by Job, when he protests his innocence before God. He gives a prominent place to his care for the poor, even accepting that had he turned the poor man away empty-handed from his gate he would have deserved all he was suffering and much more (Job 31:16-23). The Psalms also have frequent references to the poor.

In the prophets we hear much about the poor and social justice. Amos clearly condemns those 'who buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals' (Amos 8:4-6). Perhaps Ezekiel is the prophet who expresses most strikingly the divine displeasure with any ill-treatment of the poor when he says, 'Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and the needy' (Ezekiel 16:49). Isaiah spoke out against hypocritical



religious practices, reminding the people that true fasting was demonstrated when God's people chose to 'loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free...to share your bread with the hungry... and not to hide yourself from your own flesh' (Isaiah 58:6-7).

Jesus picked up on Isaiah's prophecy when he read from Isaiah 61, '...he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor...to set at liberty those who are oppressed...,' announcing to the congregation that this was now fulfilled in their hearing. In His teaching He emphasised the need to 'love your neighbour as yourself'; 'love your enemies, and do good, and lend expecting nothing in return...and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful' (Luke 6:35-36); and 'sell your possessions, and give to the needy' (Luke 12:33). The well-known parable of the Good Samaritan and the very solemn teaching on the Judgement Day in Matthew 25:37-39 leave us in no doubt that a heart for the poor is at the heart of the gospel because it reflects the heart of our Heavenly Father. His healing miracles serve to underline this.

The apostle Paul continued this emphasis on the poor; referring to a decision by a church council, he said, 'Only they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do' (Galatians 2:10). John is more specific, saying, 'But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?' (1 John 3:17). James adds, 'Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world' (James 1:27).

So much more could be said. The Bible is so full of teaching on our obligations towards the poor and the oppressed that we have to ask ourselves if we are being faithful to the Word in our regular teaching ministry, or allowing our predilections to select what we think important and play down the massive volume of Scripture that talks of the poor.

### Trade Injustice

For most people it is clear that trade is the engine of economic development and that better management of

international trade offers one of the best opportunities for people in developing countries to escape from poverty and build sustainable livelihoods. It is also widely accepted that the present international trade system unfairly limits the potential for poorer countries to achieve these objectives, especially in agricultural markets.

Many factors contribute to trade injustice, some of the most important being:

- The dependency of many countries on a narrow range of primary export commodities;
- Protectionist policies by richer countries;
- The power of a few dominant commodity traders.

## Nine out of ten Christians live in poverty.

### Fairtrade - One way we can make a difference

Fairtrade changes the lives of producers who are suffering as a result of unjust international trade rules. When we choose Fairtrade, it not only immediately benefits producers but also sends a signal to the government that we want to see a change in the unfair trade rules that undermine livelihoods and reduce the opportunities of millions of producers in developing countries.

The basic idea of arranging the sale of goods in such a way as to give a fair return to the producer is not new. We have it in small ventures such as Tearcraft, Traidcraft and a host of other small-scale direct links between producers of craftwork and the UK market. However, there has also grown up in recent years a much bigger movement that is successfully using consumer power to change the marketplace.

### Origins of Fairtrade

The Fairtrade Foundation was established in 1992 by CAFOD, Christian Aid, New Consumer, Oxfam, Traidcraft and the World Development Movement. These founding organisations

were later joined by Britain's largest women's organisation, the Women's Institute and also Tearfund. The first Fairtrade certified product, Green & Black's Fairtrade Maya Gold chocolate, was launched in 1994, and was shortly followed by Cafédirect, Fairtrade Coffee and Clipper Fairtrade Tea. Since then there has been a continuous growth in the number of products, outlets in the UK, and consumer confidence.

The first Fairtrade label was launched in 1988 in the Netherlands and applied only to coffee. It was a specific response to the collapse of the world coffee price, which fell for some years to far less than the cost of production, and led to much suffering for coffee farmers



A Coffee farmer in Uganda ©Simon Rawles

and their families. Today, Fairtrade standards are set for a range of commodities from the developing world. The FAIRTRADE mark can now be found on over 700 products in shops, cafés, workplaces, and online. Worldwide, Fairtrade is working with 422 producer organizations in 49 countries. Globally, consumers worldwide spent £1.1bn on Fairtrade certified products in 2006. This is a 42% increase on the previous year, and in 2008 it now benefits over 7 million people - farmers, workers, and their families - in developing countries.



### How does Fairtrade operate?

Fairtrade Foundation is the UK member of Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO, [www.fairtrade.net](http://www.fairtrade.net)), which unites 20 national initiatives across Europe, Japan, North America, Mexico and Australia/ New Zealand, and licenses the FAIRTRADE Mark in the UK.

The FAIRTRADE Mark guarantees:

- farmers a fair and stable price for their products;
- extra income for farmers and estate workers to improve their lives;
- a greater respect for the environment;
- a closer link between consumers and producers;
- a stronger position for small farmers in world markets.

**It now benefits over 7 million people - farmers, workers, and their families in developing countries.**

Under Fairtrade labelling, there are two sets of generic producer standards, one for small farmers and one for workers on plantations and in processing factories. The first set applies to smallholders organised in co-operatives or other organisations with a democratic, participative structure. The second set applies to organised workers whose employers pay decent wages, guarantee the right to join trade unions, and provide decent housing, where relevant. On plantations and in factories, minimum health and safety as well as environmental standards must be complied with, and no child or forced labour can occur.

The Fairtrade system seeks to tackle some of the current trade injustices by:

- providing minimum prices to producers that cover the costs of sustainable production and living;
- including a premium that producers can invest in development;
- offering advance credit facilities when requested by producers, and encouraging contracts that allow for long-term planning and sustainable production practices;

- encouraging more direct trading relationships in the supply chain;
- encouraging small farmers to work together in co-operatives and associations, sharing market knowledge, increasing bargaining power, and allowing greater community improvements.

The Fairtrade Foundation, with its international partners, checks that approved products continue to meet these criteria.

### What can we do?

Fairtrade has moved forward through the participation of individuals supporting this initiative. As shoppers buy Fairtrade products, shops will stock them. As the electorate promote Fairtrade, politicians declare their support. The following areas for action are open to us:

1. As individuals, by choosing to purchase Fairtrade products, we play our part in enabling farmers and workers to bring about change today in their own lives and communities, as well as sending out a signal for justice in wider international trade.
2. As individual voters we can use our democratic rights to encourage local authorities to become Fairtrade institutions, using Fairtrade products in their catering and in schools.
3. As members of local congregations we can request our Churches to demonstrate long-term commitment to supporting trade justice. To become a Fairtrade Church, communities must commit to:
  - using Fairtrade tea and coffee at church events;
  - moving forward on using other Fairtrade products where possible;
  - promoting Fairtrade.

*Grateful acknowledgement is made of material taken from the Fairtrade website:*  
**[www.fairtrade.org.uk](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk)**

## Dumbarton Free High Centenary

On Friday 13 June 2008, Dumbarton Free High was packed to capacity to celebrate the Centenary of the opening of our church building in Latta Street on Sunday 10 June 1908. The crowd attending exceeded all expectations, so much so that even with spare seating it was almost standing room only when the service started.



Left to right: Peter Johnson, Robert Clark, John McFall MP, Donald Macleod, Mrs McFall, Robert Sinclair, Tommy Mackay

The speaker for the evening was Principal Donald Macleod, and the worship was led by the Glasgow Psalm Singers. Professor Macleod preached from Hebrews 4:14, 'Let us hold fast our confession', reaffirming that the message of the Gospel was God's and not ours, and that it was unchanging in a changing world.

Among those attending were the local MP, John McFall, and his wife Joan. When we gathered afterwards in the upstairs hall for supper and fellowship, Mr McFall was invited to contribute, and he spoke well of his long association with the church and its congregation. A historical display of photographs and artefacts brought to life the hundred years that had passed. Our minister, Rev Robert Sinclair, reminded us of the opening of the building in 1908, when the first minister, Rev E Marshall McFadden, was joined by Rev M MacKenzie of the Free North Church, Inverness. In those days three or four hundred regularly attended the worship on the Lord's Day.



Our Centenary meetings concluded on Sunday 15 June when our services, including Communion, were taken by Rev Kenny MacDonald, formerly of Rosskeen. We had opportunity again to reflect on all of the Lord's goodness and faithfulness to us in the past and to look forward to future blessings.

**Professor Tommy MacKay**

## Polkinghorne visits Achiltibuie

Britain's normally cocksure atheist-in-chief, Richard Dawkins, conceded in his book *The God Delusion* that he was baffled by John Polkinghorne – 'a good scientist who is sincerely religious.' The Reverend Dr Polkinghorne, KBE, FRS, worked for a quarter of a century at the cutting edge of theoretical physics, where he played an important part in the discovery of quarks, one of the basic constituents of matter. In his fifties, he embarked on a new career and studied for the priesthood. Later in life, he became president of Queens' College, Cambridge, founding president of the International Society for Science and Religion, and a member of the BMA ethics committee and the Human Genetics Commission.

Polkinghorne's great endeavour is to show that science and religion are by no means mutually exclusive. He argues that the uncertainty principle (which is fundamental to quantum mechanics) proves compellingly that standard concepts of causation cannot adequately explain the world. One of his most startling accounts concerns "unseen reality" – a concept that applies as much to particle physics as to religion. Though the reality of quarks has been convincingly established, nobody has ever seen one in isolation in the laboratory. Their very nature prevents this, just as the nature of God makes Him invisible.

John Polkinhorne will travel all the way from Cambridge to Achiltibuie to give a talk on "Science and Religion" in the community hall on 20 November at 19.30. This promises to be a unique event. It is not often that one has the chance to listen to one of the leading scientists of the second half of the 20th century, who became one of the most remarkable thinkers of our time. Everybody is most welcome to attend – so be there and see whether you'll be as baffled as Richard Dawkins!

### The Board of Trustees acknowledge with grateful thanks the following legacy:

£3,944.11 – Florrie Donnan  
For Knock Evangelical Presbyterian Church\*

\*This legacy was acknowledged incorrectly in the August issue of *The Monthly Record*

## Induction at Nairn

What can we say about Nairn? Charlie Chaplin used to go on holiday there, William Whitelaw was born there, Tilda Swinton lives there, and Nairn County have just won the North of Scotland Cup, their first trophy in 31 years. We can also say that Murdo (Mud) MacLeod is now minister at the Free Church there.

Murdo's induction took place on Friday 22 August when Gordon Martin, Urray, preached from Nehemiah 3. It was an encouraging evening with all the usual ingredients: a packed church, amazing food, and words from friends which were all winsome and well deserved. It was clear that Mud and Maggie have ministry hearts, and there was much evidence of their mutual love for the Lord and for His people.



*Mud, Maggie, Angus and Kirsty*

The church at Nairn has experienced a degree of encouragement in recent years. It has benefitted from the four year ministry of Bill Evans, who was an MTW missionary who engaged in a process of revitalisation. The buildings are now in good shape and the orientation of the congregation is much more outwardly focused.

The task which is now before the Nairn congregation is to faithfully proclaim the gospel to this growing community strategically located on the A96, the Inverness to Aberdeen road. The challenge of the congregation is to engage with the local community and build up the church with people from Nairn and the surrounding area. The idea of growing the church with people from Free Church backgrounds is now part of history and no where illustrates this better than the towns of the A96. Why is there no Free Church in Keith, Huntly or Inverurie?

We do rejoice in this new ministry. We may have a mild interest in Nairn County, but we hope and pray for what the older wise people called 'trophies of grace'.

DCM



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The closing date for applications is  
**Friday 17 October.**

## Bring Me My Broadsword

'I see a dark sail on the horizon.' So begins the title song from the Jethro Tull album *The Broadsword and the Beast*, an image which picks up on ideas of Viking invasions in the north of Britain, which were no doubt dreaded by the inhabitants. A dark sail on the horizon spoke of imminent attack. I have a feeling that Ian Anderson, the band's eccentric flautist, frontman, and resident bard, did not have the conservative evangelical world in his mind when he wrote it; but frankly, it is an extremely apt line for the current situation, for there is indeed a dark sail on the horizon. What is it? The rise of Islam in the West? The greed and consumerism of the current age? Perhaps the public leaders of the church who argue for the legitimacy of homosexual unions? Well, all could indeed be construed as dark sails of varying sizes on the horizon, but I am not too concerned about them. Not that they are not serious problems, because they are; but they all have something in common – the fact that they are pike-staffingly obvious – which somewhat lessens their danger. When a man comes running down your street in a ski mask, brandishing a chainsaw, and screaming that he wants to kill someone, the danger is rather obvious, and so is the solution: generally speaking, you would not open your front door and invite such a person to join you, your beautiful wife, and your two-point-four kids for a cup of afternoon Earl Grey; no, unless you are as mad as the nutter with the chainsaw, you get inside, you phone the police, and you do not venture out until the trained marksmen have dealt with the problem. Chainsaw killers are obvious problems; so are mad mullahs, money-worshippers, and vicars intent on marrying Adam and Steve.

**The wedge that has been consciously driven between systematic theology and biblical theology over recent decades in influential circles is starting to bear very bad fruit.**

The dark sail I see on the horizon is much more subtle than that; so subtle, in fact, that some think it is not sinister, but rather bringing much-needed help to the evangelical world. I refer to the rising number of books that seek to save traditional, conservative evangelicalism from an outmoded view of scripture. Books by Peter Enns, Craig Allert, Kenton Sparks, and Andrew McGowan have all, in different ways, called into question the classic formulation of the doctrine of scripture that has so dominated conservative evangelicalism in Britain and America for more than a century: that of Old Princeton, which was most famously articulated by the great theologian B. B. Warfield. These men are no fools; they are learned, thoughtful and articulate, they cannot simply be dismissed with a wave of the hand, and I suspect they represent just the start of what will, in the next decade, be a veritable deluge of evangelical books trying to overturn the doctrine of scripture.



*Carl Trueman*

I have not space here to deal with the various arguments these writers have articulated. Good reviews of their books by, among others, Don Carson, Greg Beale, Steve Baugh, and the Free Kirk's own Iain D, are available on the web for any who cares to do a google search. What I want to suggest, however, is that these books give cause for concern on a number of fronts beyond the arguments they propose.

Firstly, and most concerning of all, is the fact that they have won friends in places where one would not have expected it. Leading evangelical churchmen and educators have endorsed these books, sometimes on the cover, but also in classrooms, conference halls, and pulpits. When those who have impeccable public reputations for orthodoxy not only give these books a charitable pass, but positively promote them as pointing the way forward, there is cause for concern.

Secondly, and perhaps something that explains the first point, is what this positive reception shows about the current culture of evangelicalism and evangelical theology. The wedge that has been consciously driven between systematic theology and biblical theology over recent decades in influential circles is starting to bear very bad fruit. Exclusive emphasis on the Bible as storytelling has combined with a trendy cultural impatience both with the past and with the very idea of systematic theology, and this has provided fertile soil for the reception of the kind of ideas promoted by the scripture revisionists.

Thirdly, this then points to the basic impatience with tradition and, dare one say it, with the authority of the past, which frequently drives these writers and those who are so eager to take on board their innovations. Is it overstating the case to say that so much of the current rebellion against inerrancy is as much a rebellion of children against parents, such a classic cliché of current society in general, as anything?

These are worrying times. When Old Princeton on scripture is rejected, and this rejection is met not with outrage or even shocked silence in some quarters, but rather with a round of applause and an affirming pat on the back, we need to be genuinely concerned. After all, is it really true that the Church's problem is that she has not taken seriously the humanity of scripture? Or that she has too high a doctrine

of scripture? Or that nobody has ever seen that there are difficulties in scripture before? And is the pressing need of the hour that of humanizing scripture in ways that, quite frankly, by any normal standard seem to make it less, not more, reliable and authoritative? The authority of Scripture is non-negotiable for Protestants, but, as with that other non-negotiable doctrine, justification by grace through faith, there are those within our own fold who want to revise it; and they want to give the traditional understanding of its truthfulness and authority the status of the embarrassing drunken uncle at the party, and show it the door as soon as possible. As far as evangelical institutions and churches go, I for one do not think that it is inerrancy and justification by faith that need to be shown the door.

**It is time for us to take up our broadswords, engage our clear understanding, and defend the evangelical heritage on scripture, on justification, and on all the other doctrines**

The protagonist in Ian Anderson's song has it right. When he sees the dark sail on the horizon, he doesn't set out the best family china and hope the invaders will join him in the parlor for a nice cuppa. He turns to his companion and commands: 'Bring me my broadsword, and clear understanding.' It is time for us to take up our broadswords, engage our clear understanding, and defend the evangelical heritage on scripture, on justification, and on all the other doctrines which we are now being told (as we have been told so many times before) have had their day, and this even by those within the evangelical fold. If we fail to do so, then as surely as we sow the wind, our children will just as surely reap the whirlwind.

**The MacMillan Lecture on Evangelism**

**Rev Martin Allen**

Formerly Minister of Chryston Parish Church

**'Local Congregational Evangelism'**

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# Building for Jesus - in Dingwall

In 2005 the elders and deacons in Dingwall and Strathpeffer agreed it was time to remodel the interior of the large and imposing building in Dingwall to better serve modern ministry needs. The building offered many wonderful blessings and opportunities, along with numerous headaches. Was a high-maintenance 1,200 seat building an asset or a liability? The congregation's answer was determined by an excellent town-centre location, a basically sound building structure, and a sense that the congregation itself was viable, that it had a heart for mission at home and abroad, and that it longed to grow. Believing that the congregation could continue to occupy a strategic role in extending God's Kingdom, the decision was made to stay in the historic location and 19th-century building, but to make the most of that resource, maximizing opportunities to use the building for ministry and for the use of the wider church and the community.

Church building projects can either sap or revitalize a congregation, a leadership team, and a ministry. A bit of such "sapping" is inevitable, but it is possible to guard against fatigue. The Dingwall congregation believe their recent building project was a great success and fully justified the effort and expense. The congregation moved back into their building on 20 July 2008, after six months meeting in a school, and a lengthy renovation and remodelling process lasting over two years.

Historic associations with building and places can make contemporary change problematic. In the case of Dingwall, some defects in the building were noted in the 1880s, but were never corrected after the death of the first minister. For many decades in the 19th and 20th century the stewards of the building mainly focused on conservation. The church has been lovingly maintained, and a good hall added to it, but it essentially remained unchanged from the building it was when it opened in 1870. Over that time, patterns of building usage, the size of the congregation, and standards of domestic comfort have all changed dramatically. Our forefathers were not unchanging stewards tending a museum. Dr Kennedy himself abandoned Dingwall's first Disruption Free Kirk of 1844, changing one building for another and far better replacement.



The Deacons' Court had a more modest ambition. Their wish list included more space in which to move around; an area to mingle in for tea and fellowship; a more open platform at the front; the best available contemporary sound and visual display systems to assist in worship and teaching; seating that was flexible and comfortable; much better lighting; and bright and restful decoration that enhanced the great architectural beauty of the building and made the most of the windows and stained glass. There was also a desire to minimize the oppressive effect of large amounts of dark timber on display. The church needed toilets, catering facilities, and disabled-friendly access. All these features were absent from the building. The flue and heating system was failing, and under-floor heating seemed the best option on the market.

**Most people feel that the atmosphere in Dingwall Church has been transformed, becoming restful, welcoming, and very conducive to worship.**

As soon as the renovation project began, with a budget of about £160,000 to renovate the church and hall, the congregation ran into unforeseen trouble. Serious wet and dry rot problems were detected, which could have rendered the building unusable. These problems were traced to 19th-century concealed pipe work, and to defects in the roof and really major defects in the stone masonry and pointing. Putting the structure right was a huge task. It took up two years and an additional £200,000 of expenditure. By the autumn of 2007, the shell of the building was secured and looking great, but no progress had been made on the internal renovations. Asbestos contamination came to light, and dealing with this would also prove costly and time-consuming.

It would have been easy to give up at that point, or to delay the internal renovations. However, the Deacons' Court agreed that they could not allow the situation to stagnate. The growth potential of the congregation was being hindered by the existing structures. The congregation had continued using the building while it was a building site occupied by stone-masons and timber specialists. It was agreed to finish the job as speedily as possible. After tendering for the work and agreeing a budget, a small property committee of three members (an elder, a deacon, and the minister) were empowered by the Deacons' Court to take day-to-day decisions and to negotiate with our architect, tradesmen and contractors.

In God's providence, the amount of money required for the project appears to have been provided. We have been able to sell property and have been gifted generous legacy income enabling us to go ahead with the whole project. The Board of Trustees were good enough to advance us a loan of £60,000.

After recovery of eligible VAT expenditure, we hope to be able to repay most or all of that loan. Donations towards the project are welcome, and can be sent to: **Murdo MacArthur, The Lodge, Pellaig, Dingwall.**

The congregation learnt many lessons while they were “home-less”, and they now greatly appreciate being back in their own building. Most people feel that the atmosphere in Dingwall Church has been transformed, becoming restful, welcoming, and very conducive to worship.

It is a joy to visit, and a joy to belong there as part of a fellowship. The congregation thanks all who helped them, and asks for prayer as they work together. The Lord is blessing the work. All glory to God, who alone builds the house.



*During Construction*

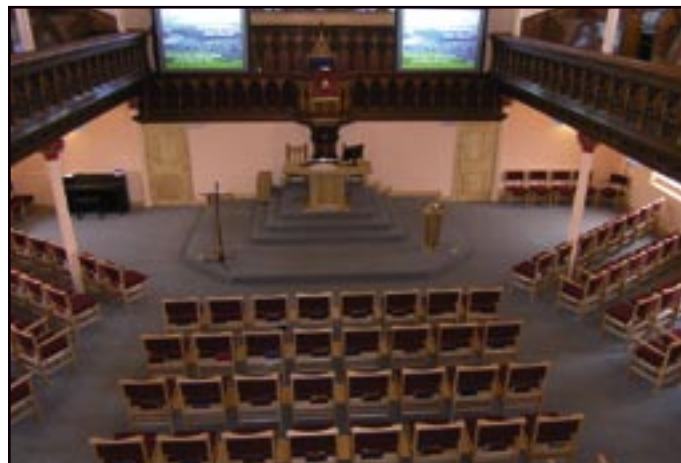


### What worked well, and what lessons have we learned?

- Trust in the Lord to provide. Plan prayerfully, as good stewards, and you will put away small ambitions.
- Have future ministry needs and goals in mind as you plan and pray. That will also help put away small ambitions, keep you focused on loving people in the church, and help you connect with people outside the church that we are called to reach for Christ.
- Leaders must lead, and they must have an overall vision. Once there is a general vision of how the church should develop, a vision that the leaders agree on and believe to be biblical, it is the leader's task to share that vision with God's people. Keep communicating, keep encouraging, and get on with making it happen.
- Break down large tasks, and share out responsibilities to as many people as possible. Avoid unnecessary meetings (that are Satan's way of getting us to talk while we do nothing). Give clearly defined responsibility to small groups (of elders, deacons, and volunteers, etc.) and trust these groups to get on with it.
- Involve people on the fringes of the church by giving them a job to do.
- Don't fear change. Don't fear the reaction of men.
- Check your facts carefully, get good advice, and make sure you're well informed about health and safety issues and planning and building control regulations.
- Don't take an official's "No" for an answer. If you believe there is something you should do for God's kingdom, be firm and persistent. The local planners threatened to stop the Dingwall development because the building was listed. Unfortunately for them, and fortunately for the church, the law exempts churches from some of the more stringent aspects of planning law as they affect the interior of buildings.



*Volunteers bringing in new seats*



*The finished job*



*Sunday Morning Worship*



# What I Learned from the Free Church

## Experiences of a German Ministry Student in Scotland

**Michael Braeutigam** is minister of the Free Evangelical Church of St. Wendel in Germany ([www.st.wendel.feg.de](http://www.st.wendel.feg.de))



*Jenni and Michael Braeutigam*

Jenni and I came to Edinburgh two weeks after our wedding in the summer of 2005. I took up my postgraduate studies at the Free Church College, and Jenni, a children's nurse, found work at the Sick Kids hospital. As our flat in Leith was not obtainable, we lived for a month at the Free Church's missionaries' furlough flat in Newington (for which we are still very grateful). As we were looking for a church to attend, we noticed that Buccleuch & Greyfriars was just a few minutes' walk away. So we went there on a Sunday morning. And we were baffled. Where was the music band? Where was the choir? Where was the moderator of the service? Where was the PowerPoint projection? Why were the announcements so short? Why was the sermon so long? Almost everything was different from what we were used to in our evangelical churches in Germany. We were curious and returned the next Sunday. Very soon we not only adapted to this worship style but we began to love the service in the Free Church – and the Free Church as a whole. Looking back now in Germany as the minister of a small evangelical church, I realise that I owe the Free Church a lot, and I want to share some things that I learned.

### Is our service a God-oriented service? Does everything revolve around Him?

First of all, **I learned from the Free Church how to conduct a God-worship service.** The service in the Free Church is a God-oriented service, focusing on the main things: God, prayer, Bible reading, Psalm singing, and preaching. Undoubtedly, God is in the centre: He is prayed to, His Word is sung, His Word is read, His Word is preached. Now I want the service in my congregation to be like that. I am constantly questioning myself: Is our service a God-oriented service? Does everything revolve around Him? Are there any parts of the service that distract our attention from God towards other things? I am thankful that I learned to always keep the main thing the main thing.

In addition to that, **I learned from the Free Church that less is more.** A Free Church Sunday service has a beautiful simplicity. Everything circles around the most important things. There is no place for unnecessary distractions. We had many visitors, family and friends, during our time in Scotland. One couple that joined a Sunday service at Buccleuch told us afterwards, 'We never thought that a service like that could be so refreshing and appealing to us. A service that is stripped of all the redundancies we pack into our German Sunday service.' I learned that less is more. That's what I try to implement in my church. I don't have to do the "Sunday service show" with gigs, band and special guests. That might attract more people, but it misses the whole point. It is not about me or the people, it is

about God. We want to focus on Him. What a relief. Thank you, Free Church, for this lesson.

**I learned from the Free Church the importance of public Bible reading.** On one Sunday in Buccleuch, the minister was reading a passage from the New Testament. While I was wondering why he would want to read the whole chapter (it was quite a long chapter), it happened. God's Word happened to me. A verse struck me. And this verse accompanied me during the following week, maybe even more than the sermon. I learnt that the public reading of God's Word alone can have a life-changing effect. I knew that in theory, but experiencing it really made the difference. When I started ministering to my congregation there were no pew Bibles. Having my experience in mind, I bought 30 Bibles for our pews and I encouraged my congregation to read the texts along with me. I know that God can work miracles through His Word. It might not be my sermon that does it. Yet, it could be a verse, read during a service, that changes people. I am glad I learned that.

**I learned from the Free Church how to pray.** The Free Church challenged my prayers. I have to confess that I was, and still am, far too superficial in my prayers. I noticed that, whether in church or college or at home, people really cared about what they would pray. They would select the words very carefully, always keeping in mind to whom they were talking: God Almighty. In retrospect, I notice that especially my public prayer style was changed. I hope that my prayers are more Bible-shaped, Gospel-filled and God-centred than before. Today, I sometimes write down what I want to pray before a service, which helps me to avoid repetitions or cant.

**I learned from the Free Church to cherish the Psalms.** It was a great experience to sing God's word on a Sunday morning. We have never done that in Germany. As far as I know, singing Psalms is unknown to the German evangelicals. I don't know of any German Psalter with accompanying tunes. It is therefore one of my aims in my ministry to promote Psalm singing. I translated a couple of Psalms so that they would fit to some of the tunes of the Free Church's *Sing Psalms* book. I am glad I discovered Psalm singing for my congregation as well as for personal devotions.

**I learned from the Free Church the importance of theology for the church.** We were impressed by the wide range of offers for Christian gatherings and spiritual nourishment in the Free Church: adult Sunday School, two services on a Sunday (in Germany there is only one service in the morning), prayer meetings on Wednesdays, regular Bible Study, Prayer breakfasts... People have several chances a week to pray, read the Bible, listen to sermons or learn about theological topics. And people attend! They really show up! In my German evangelical circles, I observe a growing suspicion against theology. The focus shifts towards community activities, and doctrine fades away. But theology matters. Believers need to be equipped with sound doctrine. And the Free Church showed me that this is realisable in church. I have listened to clever children's addresses where sound theology was appropriately delivered to kids. I enjoyed the adult Sunday Schools, where great doctrine was unfolded so that even I could understand it. My goal is to awaken a longing for spiritual depth in my congregation.

I want my people to stand firm, to know what they believe. That is why I am going to re-introduce the Heidelberg Catechism (in contemporary German) to my congregation during the autumn Bible studies. I also started a "Church Academy" where we study specific topics on a Sunday evening. Furthermore, I encourage my congregation to read good books that go deeper. Thank you, Free Church, for affirming my view that theology matters and for proving to me that it works in everyday church life.

When I studied at the Free Church College, I was informed about the many Scottish ministers and theologians who went to Germany at the beginning of the last century in order to learn from the liberal scholars. What they brought back to Scotland wasn't very helpful, I'm afraid. That is why I am all the more thankful that I could return to Germany having learned many good lessons. Thank you, Free Church! May God bless you!

## Obituary

### Principal-Emeritus A C Boyd

With the death of Rev Principal-Emeritus A C Boyd on 5 August 2008, the Free Church of Scotland lost one of its senior and most respected ministers.

Archibald Campbell Boyd was born in Oban, Argyllshire on 31 July 1934, and was educated at the local High School, where he excelled both academically and in athletics. From there he entered the University of Edinburgh, from which he graduated in both Arts and Divinity, and afterward trained for the ministry at the Free Church of Scotland College.

From his early years Principal Boyd had a heart for mission, and he applied to go as a missionary to India when his theological training was completed. However, for medical reasons he was prevented from proceeding to the Foreign Mission Field, and in 1959 he was ordained and inducted to the congregation of Keiss in Caithness. In September 1958 he married Doreen Paterson of Edinburgh, and they had four children: Sharon, Ruth, Sandy, and Kenneth.

From Keiss, Rev Boyd was called to the congregation of Shettleston, Glasgow and then to Brora, Sutherland. In 1977 he was called to the Chair of Greek and New Testament Exegesis in the Free Church College, Edinburgh, a post he held until his retirement in 1999. As a Professor his lectures were marked by an evident love for his subject and an obvious passion for the Saviour about whom he taught. In 1985 the Church honoured him by electing him Moderator of the



General Assembly, and in 1988 he was appointed Principal of the College. In all of these varied duties, especially during a very stressful time for the denomination, he always showed a dignified, gracious and kindly manner.

Throughout his ministry, both in the pastorate and in the College, Rev Boyd retained his vital interest in the Foreign Missionary work of the Church, an interest so obviously shared by his wife Doreen. At different times he served as Secretary of the International Missions Board of the Church, as its Chairman and, on several occasions, as one of its delegates to the various mission fields of the Church. He was a respected member, and for a time Chairman, of the Missions Committee of the International Conference of Reformed Churches. Over the years the Boyds' home hosted missionaries, their families, and mission representatives from all over the world.

Archibald Boyd was an eminent Christian gentleman, patient, prayerful, unfailingly courteous and kind. He had a great interest and concern for people, and was a wise spiritual counsellor and faithful elder in the congregation of Free St Columba's, Edinburgh. Altogether he was a rare example of "servant leadership".

For a number of years he suffered from a severe debilitating illness, which gradually progressed to the extent that he had to have full-time professional nursing care. This he submitted to with his usual humble acceptance of the way his Lord had ordered the course of his life, and when that life ended we lost a dear Christian brother who had gone to 'dwell in the house of the Lord forever'. We mourn, but also give thanks for the memories and the example that "Archie" has left to us all.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to Doreen and the family and to Archie's brothers in their loss, and we commend them to the 'Father of compassion and the God of all comfort' (2 Corinthians 1:3).

# Latha fois

Bha oidhche àlainn againn ann an Talla a' Bhaile far an robh coinneamh bhliadhnail airson dìon na Sàbaid. Bhruidhinn gach duine glè mhath agus chuala sinn mar a bha ainm Nàbot cho prìseil againn ,oir ged nach robh e ach mar fhear anns an t-sreath cha robh e airson dileab athraichean a thoirt seachad. Nach b' àlainn an smuain sin? Cha leig sinn a leas a bhith mòr , ainmeil ann an sùilean dhaoine airson nithean mòra a dhèanamh ann an sealladh Dhè. Tha sealladh an t-saoghail agus sealladh Dhè gu math tric eadar-dhealaicht'.Chaidh ar n-aire a thoirt gu bàrdachd Bheurla, "Caomhainn a' chraobh sin"-bàrdachd air nach robh mi eòlach idir, ach a lorg mi agus is e seo brìgh na bàrdachd.

Caomhainn a' chraobh sin.

A choillteir fàg a' chraobh tha sin,  
na seasamh anns an àit'  
Oir b' i a rinn dìon nam òige dhomh  
a-nis bidh mi rith' tlàth  
b' e làmhan còir' mo shinnsearan  
a chur i faisg air làimh  
a choillteir leig leath' seasamh  
s na dèan dochann oirr' no call.

Bha mòran gu math eòlach oirr'  
is sgap a cliù 's a glòir  
air feadh gach tìr is eile  
a-nis bi thus' rith' còir  
a choillteir cùm air-ais do làmh  
fàg a freumhan fhathast an sàs  
nach caomhain thus' an darach-sa  
ged dh'fhàs i suas cho àrd.

Tha i cho dlùth dom chridhe-sa  
's a tha a stoc rith' fhèin  
an seo bidh ceòl aig eunlaith  
is lùbaidh meangan maoth  
B' e seo a' chraobh a sheas ri stoirm  
A choillteir, bi rith' caomh  
Fhads bhios làmh agam a nì cabhair oirr'  
Cha dochann tuagh a taobh.

Tha an t-Sàbaid againn fhathast. Fhuair sinn an dileab-sa agus cha chòir gu leigeadh sinn le aon duine seo a thoirt bhuainn no a spìonadh bhuainn. Bidh sinn ag iarraidh a caomhnadh agus seasamh air a son oir tha e follaiseach don t-saoghal gur e seo nì a tha againn –aon latha fois ann an saoghal dripeil. Chaidh ar n-aire a stiùireadh gu mar a bha Crìosdaidhean ag iarraidh lagh Dhè a chumail, ged a bha iad glè chinnteach nach robh seo nan comas. Chuala sinn mar a pheacaich ar ciad sinnsearan agus mar a bhris iad a h-uile àithne. Chaidh seo a mhìneachadh dhuinn ann an dòigh air leth inntinneach.

Anns an t-saoghal an-diugh tha beachdan eadar-dhealaicht' aig daoine a thaobh a bhith a' gleidheadh na Sàbaid, ach is fheudar dhuinn a bhith a' gabhail ri riaghailt Dhè. Ghabh Esan fois agus dh' àithn' E dhuinn latha fois a bhith againn. Is ann a tha an latha-sa na ùrachadh agus na bheannachd do mhòran anns an t-saoghal.



Cha robh Nàbot ainmeil. Chan eil inneas air mòran mu thimcheall ach abair gun do dh' fhuiling Nàbot . Nar linn fhìn chan fhaod sinn a bhith a' smaoinichadh nach bi sinn a' fulang. Eadhon ag èisteachd riutha-san a bha air àrd ùrlar bha e ro shoilleir gu robh iadsan air an sàrachadh bho iomadh taobh. Nach bu chòir dhuinn a bhith ag ùrnaigh air an son-gu faigheadh iad neart, misneach agus comas airson gach freagairt a bhios aca dhaibhsan a tha airson an dileab-sa a sgrios.

Taing mhòr dhaibh airson na h-obrach agus gach oidhirp a tha iad a' dèanamh agus taing don Ollamh Urramach I. D. Caimbeul airson raon-smaoinichaidh tlachdmhor fhosgladh a-mach dhuinn.

## Seanfhacail

**Cha bhi meas air an tobar gus an traogh e.**

**An turadh, an t-anmoch, am muir-làn 's an Dòmhnach.**

# NHS Healthcare Chaplaincy: Soft Option or Serious Opportunity?



**Rev Robert Macleod** was the minister of Falkirk Free Church and is now Hospital Chaplain for Forth Valley NHS Acute Services.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the NHS. The original conception of a publicly funded provision as part of a service to defeat the five giants (want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness) of oppression in post-war Britain was noble. It has grown to

become the largest employer in the country and undergone dramatic changes. In particular, the last 20 years have seen major re-organisational change, from management structures to patient focus and choice. As an organisation it is very much part of all our lives, whether through personal experience of care, criticism, political interest and policy, or – not least – parking!

At the outset of the millennium, one of the significant themes of healthcare was to produce a patient-led service where individual needs were met within a nationally fair system. This equality/diversity agenda sought to address various groups subject to discrimination, such as the disabled, faith groups, minority ethnic communities, the elderly, children and young people, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, and women and men. It is within this anti-discriminatory ethos that healthcare chaplains find themselves working and giving a lead.

## The Present

All are aware that our Scottish spiritual heritage has changed, and reflects a pattern that is emerging throughout Western Europe. Many of our own communities and congregations are living testimony to this marked decline in adherence to traditional institutional religion. However, whilst this trend is irrefutable, there is an undoubted awareness of and interest in the spiritual, albeit reflected in more individualistic and subjective ways. Historically, chaplaincy has worked against the assumption of a link between illness, suffering and faith, and that these are linked to “recovery”. The notion of healing and wholeness (not just physical but spiritual), the need to care for others and not just ourselves, and the appreciation of human dignity, are continuing shared norms within the ethos of modern day healthcare despite the changing religious landscape. According to Grace Davie, belief is an independent and persistent variable and *‘that far more significant are the growing numbers of British people who have indeed lost their moorings in the institutional churches, but not their inclination to believe’*. There is this reality of people connecting to and believing in things spiritual, without wanting to belong to traditional religious institutions. Secular sociologists have long predicted the collapse of religion. Anthony Giddens stated in 1990 that *‘most of the situations of modern social life are manifestly incompatible*



*with religion as a pervasive influence upon day-to-day life!* The persistence of interest in things spiritual perplexes the secularist, but should come as no surprise to the Christian. It is precisely here that, rather than confronting a depressing negative, we are presented with a great door of opportunity. The increased appreciation of things spiritual is perhaps the contemporary bridge to the tension between science and religion, and that challenges us to engage and consider ministry within the healthcare setting.

**The increased appreciation of things spiritual is perhaps the contemporary bridge to the tension between science and religion, and that challenges us to engage and consider ministry within the healthcare setting.**

The expanding appreciation of things spiritual is demonstrated in the level of comments within literature surrounding medicine, nursing, social work, alternative medicine, and, not least, in the holistic philosophy of health and illness. Fewer people may have any links to local churches and their pastoral support; yet the evidence suggests that, whether they are religious or not, when confronted with illness and hospitalisation, people share deep existential needs and concerns. People strive to make meaning of their lives and maintain hope as the questions surface: Why do I exist? Why am I ill? Will I die? What happens when I die? These are undoubtedly spiritual



*When confronted with illness and hospitalisation, people share deep existential needs and concerns.*

questions in their nature. They demonstrate that we are not merely physical bodies that from time to time require medical mechanical intervention, but rather individuals for whom the spiritual – the energy, the power, the relationships, the appreciation of presence, purpose and meaning – collectively contribute to well-being. The World Health Organisation has stated that holistic care could no longer ignore the elements of care, compassion, beliefs and values that come under the umbrella of “spiritual care”, and that it was an incomplete view of our humanity that concentrated on the physical, psychological and social: *‘health is a dynamic state of complete physical, mental spiritual and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’*. Here, NHS Scotland is committed to equality, excellence, and the provision of high-quality health services across the country, and an integral part of that service is the inclusion of people’s spiritual needs: *‘everyone, whether religious or not, needs support systems, especially in times of crises’*. Had such needs been neglected, according to Gibbons and Miller, our service would have been analogous to *‘biological garages where dysfunctional human parts are repaired or replaced’*, and such *‘prisons of technical mercy’* would have obscured people’s integrity, potential, and dignity. Healthcare chaplaincy in 21st-century Scotland is confronted with an immense challenge against the backcloth of religious, societal and even political change.

### **The Profession**

Healthcare chaplaincy, and for that matter all chaplaincy work, is no soft option, but an exciting and exacting arena of service. It is where our people are! Increasingly one hears the words of Jesus: *‘as the Father has sent me, so I send you’*. It is a work like no other and was once described as *‘always complicated, often messy and rarely simple’* (Swinton 1999:25) – a work that takes us to the edges of a world that can be risky, exposing us to criticism and personal cost. Theologically, one draws comfort from the knowledge that the “man of sorrows” was not crucified on an altar between

two candles, but on Golgotha between two thieves. The “edges” for healthcare chaplaincy are that it is able to regularly confront the best and worst of human nature, come face to face with human mortality on a daily basis, watch the invidious impact of aging, peer into the black abyss that can be people’s mental illness, search for ways to alleviate the loneliness and fear that are at times paralysing, feel with patients and families the trauma of unexpected and unwanted diagnoses/prognoses, suck for air in the emotional turmoil of victims of violence, accident, bereavement, and so many more scripts of people’s experience too unimaginable to share. Without fear of contradiction, we regularly ‘weep with those who weep’. However, let’s not forget the joys, and there are these moments: the good news, the affirming moments of appreciation, restoration to health, reconciliations, births, and best of all - the going home! In addition, within the modern context, Chaplains are expected to forge relations and give meaningful support to an increasingly stretched and at times stressed staff. Staff members are also human, knowing too well the highs and lows of providing the best care and compassion. Add to that kaleidoscope of humanity and experience the needs of families and carers, and one can appreciate the broad scope of ministry that is presented to a Chaplain, and why Nelson and Mitchell (2002:1) said, *‘Chaplaincy is poised for a quantum leap; no longer the realm of the gifted amateur working at the margins of the institution, catering to the need of the few, but a service provided by trained and accountable professionals, fully integrated and part of the healthcare team, who offer spiritual care to all; in one sense the chaplain will be expert, and yet at the same time one who affirms the shared nature of the task of spiritual care’*. Key to fulfilling the role of Chaplain is being available, continually raising awareness of the importance of the spiritual/religious, and being a resource to staff, patients, families and carers on practical, personal and professional issues. It can be said that we also do a lot of listening. It is critical that we remind ourselves that religious care is given

in the context of the shared religious beliefs, values, liturgies and lifestyle of a faith community, whilst spiritual care is given in a one-to-one relationship, is person-centred, and makes no assumptions about personal conviction or life orientation. Spiritual care is not necessarily religious, but religious care, at its best, should always be spiritual (Scottish Executive Health Dept. Letter, 2002:76).

## Key to fulfilling the role of Chaplain is being available, continually raising awareness of the spiritual/religious, and being a resource to staff, patients, families and carers on practical, personal and professional issues.

Since the issuance of the 2002 NHS Scotland guidelines on Spiritual Care, the professional role of Chaplains has been broadly accepted and seen as an exciting new initiative. Where the future may lead professionally is for another discussion. It seems to me that this "kingdom work", as against denominational work, is extensive and timeless. When the guidelines were being drawn up by what was then the Scottish Executive (now the Scottish Government), the then-Minister of Health saw clearly the benefits in health outcomes when an individual's religious/spiritual needs were met while they underwent hospitalisation or treatment. For the Chaplain, embracing Christian conviction and perspective, there is empirical evidence that one's presence, scripture readings, prayers, and timely and wise words of comfort strengthen and quiet people's concerns. To be reminded, when perhaps faith is stretched and questioning, that 'the eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms' can undoubtedly, even radically, alter one's experience. To hear 'You were there for me when I needed you' is a comment that is as encouraging to the spiritual caregiver as it is expressive of the patient's much-appreciated empowerment. Again, what perhaps captures our sense of mission and ministry within chaplaincy is that medical science is doomed to partial measures if humankind's fundamental need – their relationship with God – is not resolved. Augustine said, 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee'.

We can respond in one of two ways to the religious and societal changes with which we are confronted. We can increasingly insulate and isolate ourselves from the wider community, or engage with and be of service to it. The biblical imperative is surely set before us, firstly in the incarnation of Jesus, which should project us toward rather than away from the arenas within which Chaplains are called to serve, and secondly in the explicit commission of Jesus to go into the entire world. After all, did He not say: 'I was hungry...I was thirsty...I was a stranger...I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me... I was in prison...you visited'. John Stott expressed that we must have this Christian response 'in order to penetrate other people's worlds, as He penetrated ours; the world of their thinking, their misunderstandings of the Gospel, the world of their feeling, their pain, and the world of their living'.

## A Plea to the Church

**Appreciation/Acceptance of the role and ministry of chaplaincy.** Where is the paragraph in the Sustentation and Ministry Report to our Assembly of the work and personnel of the Free Church of Scotland involved in this area of ministry? At present we have a number: Rev A J Akroyd, Edinburgh (Prison Service, part-time); Rev A Macdonald, Dunblane (Mental Health, part-time); Rev I Beaton, Lennoxton (Acute Services, part-time); Rev D G Macdonald, Portree (Acute Services, part-time); Rev David Parker, Glasgow (Yorkhill Children's Hospital and Robin House Children's Hospice, full-time); Rev Colin Macleod, Canterbury (Armed Forces, full-time); Rev Robert Macleod (Forth Valley Acute, full-time); and Rev D Robertson (hon. Chaplain, Dundee University).

**Recognise the increasing professionalism of Chaplains within Healthcare and elsewhere.** Could Chaplaincy be seen as a ministry to train toward? At present, a number consider overseas service, youth work, and religious education within our schools. A number of academic institutions provide modules that will lead to a recognised qualification in Chaplaincy and Healthcare. In the 2008 deliverance to the Church of Scotland Assembly, eligible ministers are asked to consider offering themselves for service in the Royal Navy, Naval Reserve or Sea Cadets, Regular Army, Territorial Army and Royal Air Force.

**Utilise chaplaincy departments pastorally by making referrals of people hospitalised.** Departments should never be viewed as a threat to the work of local congregations rather a resource to be tapped into.

**Profile Departments** – Have local department representatives come along and give presentations on the work of Chaplaincy or have pictures/information sheets on Church Mission/Notice Boards and websites.



**Education** – There is a vast array of invaluable research/resources within Healthcare. Consideration could be given to tap into these and the numerous Study Days,

Conferences, and Courses that could further enhance pastoral competency.

**Contact** – For those in full-time positions it is good to have contact and the support of colleagues and friends, whether by telephone or e-mail. Chaplaincy can be a very lonely arena of service.



**Prayer** – Does the Church meaningfully and regularly pray for us? Those of us in full-time positions cannot express enough our appreciation of knowing we are upheld at the throne of God's grace.

# Sowing, Reaping & Keeping

*Michelle MacDonald gives us an update from the Outreach Support Committee.*

Outreach Support is passionate about seeing local churches motivated and equipped for outreach. By reaching out into the wider community, local churches become the means through which communities are socially and spiritually transformed. The role of Outreach Support is to encourage and support individuals and congregations to instigate mission locally. Outreach Support has now been in operation since 2005 and previously functioned for over 40 years as Highways & Byways Missions.

The Church's Great Commission from Christ is to proclaim the gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). Every church can do this by identifying relevant outreach initiatives at a local level. It is important to realise that effective outreach projects will vary from community to community. Unfortunately, we often think of the Great Commission in terms of overseas mission only, when in actual fact mission should begin at home with our families, friends and neighbours.

Over the 07/08 period the Outreach Support Committee received 10 applications and were able to support all 10 outreach projects financially, enabling churches to impact their community effectively for the gospel. The Committee were encouraged to receive applications for support from congregations who had not applied before, namely Callanish, Golspie, Brora, Dornoch, and Back. The Western Isles Presbytery also requested support for a presbytery-wide youth camp being held for the first time, and the joint presbyteries of Skye & Wester Ross, Inverness and Northern

requested support for the planned Highland Weekend for young Christians, again happening for the first time this year. Applications were also received from Kirkcaldy, Greyfriars-Stratherrick, and Kilmallie. Outreach projects varied widely from church to church, ranging from children's holiday clubs to youth fellowships, family services, day conferences, evangelistic literature distribution, camps, and other activities designed to reach out to local people in need of the gospel. This reflects the diversity of outreach projects and the importance of tailoring outreach activities for local communities, and no one knows that community better than those who live in it.

## **God is Looking for Ordinary People to Do Extraordinary Work**

Instigating small-scale local evangelistic initiatives need not be a daunting prospect. God has given every individual Christian different gifts fit for His purpose. Most of us are ordinary people in our workplaces, relationships and everyday circumstances. We might feel a sense of inadequacy when presenting the gospel to those outwith the church and often let the opportunity to reach out slip by. Opportunities to present the gospel and initiate outreach projects often come disguised as difficulties, just as they did for the disciples in Acts. Peter and John were uneducated and untrained men; yet they were able to tell all they met about the good news and make an impact for Christ (Acts 4:13). We have to embrace our local mission field through earnest prayer and seek to live and give the good news,





*Dornoch Children's Holiday Bible Club*

expecting God to open doors of opportunity. As ordinary people, we all have the capability to do extraordinary work for Christ. Individual gifts need to be identified, developed and utilised. Some Christians can proclaim the message of Christ effectively, whilst others are more effective by simply reflecting the character of Christ. Whether our gifts are those of administration, prayer, hospitality, teaching, or something else, these are all gifts that can be used to reach the lost.

**We have to embrace our local mission field through earnest prayer and seek to live and give the good news, expecting God to open doors of opportunity.**

#### **Pray, Plan and Do It**

Look at the local community and see where the people are, both spiritually and sociologically. Identify those in the congregation with the right attitude and gifts to be able to initiate and deliver local evangelism. Appoint one person to drive the project forward. Prepare a proposal with clear aims and objectives, and seek the support of the Kirk Session. Let the congregation know about the project; request prayer for anything you plan to do, and prepare well in advance. Communicate your plans/activities with the people you wish to involve from the community and with the congregation. Regularly review progress, support the volunteers, ask for feedback from any events you run, and if time allows, utilise any useful feedback you receive. It is important to organise pre- and post-mission activities to ensure that there is long-term follow-up rather than one-off bursts of activity. For example, projects in local communities need to focus on building relationships in order to develop suitable plans for evangelism in that area.

#### **Apply for Support**

Outreach Support are always available to facilitate training and help co-ordinate outreach projects and evangelistic missions, as well as providing small grants for approved projects. If you wish to apply for any of the above, please contact the Committee. There is a representative from each presbytery. Funds can also be provided to support

research, to train Christians who are willing to get involved in evangelism, to provide financial resources, and other various requirements. Prayer support and encouragement is also offered to congregations who are taking new initiatives on board.

The Committee hope to support at least another 10 outreach/evangelistic projects and training for congregations in 2008/09. Priority will be given to supporting outreach projects that are new to a particular congregation – activities that have not been tried before and that form part of a longer-term mission plan. Applications for support from struggling congregations to encourage them to reach out with the gospel into their communities will be particularly welcome. The Committee are always available to share good practice and to ensure that all congregations are aware of the kind of support that is available to them for evangelistic activities.



*Skye & Wester Ross Presbytery Camp*

To read the criteria to apply for funding, or to request an application form for your congregation, go to:  
**[www.freechurch.org/missions/os.htm](http://www.freechurch.org/missions/os.htm)**

For any other enquiries, please contact your local representative.

#### **Skye & Wester Ross**

Sandra Armstrong: **[s.armstrong181@btinternet.com](mailto:s.armstrong181@btinternet.com)**

#### **Glasgow & Argyll**

Michelle MacDonald: 01355 222446 or  
**[michellemacdonald82@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:michellemacdonald82@yahoo.co.uk)**

#### **Inverness, Lochaber & Ross**

Rory Stott: **[rkstott@aol.com](mailto:rkstott@aol.com)**

#### **Northern**

Rev Angus Lamont: **[scotpe2000@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:scotpe2000@yahoo.co.uk)**

#### **Western Isles**

Maretta Campbell (Clerk): **01851 880776** or  
**[maretta@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:maretta@blueyonder.co.uk)**

#### **Edinburgh & Perth**

Rev Colin Macleod: **0131 653 0231** or  
**[colin.macleod@sky.com](mailto:colin.macleod@sky.com)**

# A Lesson, a Regret and a Hope

*Ronnie and Morag Christie give some final thoughts as they leave South Africa.*

## A Lesson

African worship is amazing. It is spontaneous, vibrant, lively and has a certain dignity about it. Outwardly, it has almost all that could be wished for. All this is due to one simple fact: the people are not individualists but people-people. They live by the Xhosa saying: *Umntu ngumntu ngabantu* – a person is a person through people. For this reason they love being together; they worship as a body naturally, spontaneously and exuberantly, without inhibitions. This communal spirit in regard to most aspects of worship, produces something that is really wonderful.

Yet there is always a certain dignity about their worship. This is derived, in part, from their **sense of structure in society**. Everyone has his or her own place in society and will be treated accordingly – and at the top is God. It is also derived, in part, from an awareness of the importance of **form**. They like to do the same things week after week – the same things that all the other congregations of the Free Church are doing, and to do them, if possible, at the same time.

This emphasis on form is another product of their communal spirit. Everybody who belongs to the one body must do things in the same way: the same dress (the Free Church uniform, at least on special occasions) and the same order of service – greetings and welcome, Psalm, prayer, Lord's Prayer (sung), the Doxology, Psalm, reading, the Apostles' Creed (sung), Psalm, sermon, prayer, Psalm with the collection being taken, announcements, benediction, singing of Amen, procession from the church (singing), involving everybody shaking hands with everybody else.

So what have I learned?

- To be far more relaxed in worship.
- That the key to vibrant, spontaneous worship is that we get out of our individualistic mode of operation and act as



*A group in uniform at Sondelani, in the Embo District.*



*Ronnie wearing his gift of a traditional knitted hat and Morag in a beautiful traditional outfit.*

if we were indeed part of a body. We have to stop articulating our outlook on life as "I'm me", and move towards the African attitude, "I'm only a person as I relate to others".

- That a formal service – that is, where the same things are done in the same way every week – may not be a dead service; and that dignity and spontaneity are not mutually exclusive.
- That there can be wonderful Psalm singing – spontaneous and lively – without musical accompaniment.
- That all attempts to stir up the right spirit by human, mechanical or artificial means are counterproductive and that the cultivation of a communalistic spirit is the key to our problems over worship.
- That the drum and guitar and attempts to have lively worship – things which we meet with here in English-speaking churches – are empty, in comparison with the natural spontaneity and dignity of the African.

## A Regret

When I came to South Africa I was told that I didn't need to learn Xhosa, that it was too difficult, and that I was too old to learn it anyway! I now believe that none of this was true. I once met an elderly missionary lady from Glasgow who had learnt the Zulu language (which is very similar to Xhosa). So it can be done, and I regret that I didn't do it. Not to learn the language is an insult to the people whom we profess to serve. It means so much to them if we can speak in their own language.

I regret that, when I had time to learn a little Xhosa, I only aimed at achieving a theoretical knowledge of the language for academic purposes; for example, enough to help me to teach Greek and Hebrew to native Xhosa speakers with more

ease. I couldn't speak or understand it; however, I was able to check for mis-translations, proofread and edit Xhosa material:

- When one of my translators translated the phrase: "cars wear out," I was able to spot her mistake. She had said in Xhosa, "cars wear clothes on the outside"
- When my interpreter translated my prayer "we are all poor creatures," I wondered if he was trying to tell me something. He had said: "we are all poor preachers"

I regret that, although made to feel at home amongst the Xhosa, I would always be a stranger, because I could never understand them or their culture without speaking their language.

### A Hope

In general, we hope for the prosperity of the work – that people will be genuinely converted; that they will be built up in their knowledge and faith; that they will be consistent in their living; that the financial situation will improve; that there will be a real concern for evangelism; that congregations will learn to live in peace ...

More particularly, over the last two years I've been involved in helping in the preparation of a series of booklets. The first one was a booklet on procedure: *The Practice of the Free Church in Southern Africa*. But more widely useful is a series of training manuals: *The Elder and his Work*; *The Deacon and his Work*; *The Preacher and his Work*; *The Work of the Sunday School Teacher*; *The Christian Woman and her Work*; and *The Doctrines of our Church*. We hope that the booklets I have helped to prepare will be used and useful for developing the work.

I may be mistaken, but I often find myself crystallizing these hopes into one particular hope, wrapping everything up and making everything depend on one thing. So my hope is this: that a really good leader will emerge.

- This leader will be a mature minister, an African minister. But one who is able to stand out and be different.
- He will be able to set a new model of ministry in the Xhosa setting – a model characterised by hard work, humility and



*The traditional shaking of hands*

a spirit of service.

- He will be able to articulate sound theology – and to do so in Xhosa tones; that is, in accordance with African modes of thought, using Xhosa categories and terminology and illustrations, with African emphases.
- He will call the church to true faith and repentance, to sound doctrine, to holy living, to passionate evangelism and to the responsible organisation of church affairs.
- And more specifically, he will say: "Yoho, these training booklets which that Scottish *Umfundisi* helped to produce are good materials. Let us all start using them to train office-bearers, Sunday School Teachers and all the members of our churches. We are proud of being Free Church, but we don't know what our church teaches. Let's put that right by using *The Doctrines of our Church*. This *Practice* – why did we ask it to be written – why did we approve it – if we are not going to do what it recommends?"

The problems, as well as the opportunities, of the church are enormous. How are the difficulties to be overcome and the opportunities grasped? A key must surely be that there be outstanding leadership. Others may well see things differently – there are many procedures, programmes, and initiatives that could be adopted. But I would narrow my hopes down to this one main thing: the hope that God would raise up an outstanding African leader.

### Morag's Addendum

I share some of Ronnie's thoughts on leaving South Africa, but my attitude is much less cerebral. I share his regrets about not learning the language in any meaningful way, but I cannot plead lack of time; I just confess to lack of perseverance. I must express my appreciation for the patience of the women and girls I addressed during these years, as they listened to an interpreted talk. Maybe my teaching improved with translation!

I hope I have learnt that people matter more than my supposedly tight schedule. In Africa, the person you are with is the most important one. I'm not sure how that would work in the West, where we value punctuality, but it seems more Christ-like than the frenetic way of life that seems to be the norm in the UK. People are generally never in a hurry in Africa, and even if they should be, they would never dream of telling me. I took a long time to learn this lesson.

I hope I have learnt a different perspective about what constitutes a disaster or a tragedy. We are devastated when the washing machine breaks down, but my black friends are faced almost daily with such tragedies connected with poverty, HIV/AIDS and government ineptitude (both local and national) that my broken machine is no more than a mild nuisance.

My hope is that I have engendered a greater love for, and greater knowledge of, the Word of God in the Free Church women and girls in the Eastern Cape. In turn, they have taught me to be more thankful for the many blessings we enjoy every day of our lives.

# Operation San Andrés: A Christian Ministry to Peru

*Continuing on from last month, Dr. Luis Campos tells of the work with which he is involved in Collique.*

We praise our Lord that the efforts in Collique have been blessed. In 2005 we were able to purchase a plot of land, where a three-story house has been built. "OSA House" is now the centre of operations for our daily ministries in the area. Each weekday, approximately 60 children, aged eight to ten, come to OSA House for a 'Bread of Life' programme. In addition to providing a nutritious meal, the staff help them with schoolwork and teach Bible classes. Community Bible studies are also held on a weekly basis.

OSA has "adopted" the nearby Jose Galvito pre-school, providing a cooked meal for the children there. We were granted permission to construct a "sports complex" on property behind the house owned by the pre-school. Team sports and recreation provide wholesome outlets for teens and younger children who might otherwise become involved with drugs or other destructive behaviour.

**We have observed the tremendous blessings that each volunteer in this mission has received**

OSA have been making regular medical-dental mission trips to Collique since 2003, and a great number of people have been helped both medically and practically. For example, 2,000 pairs of shoes and 2,000 pairs of glasses were distributed. The young English-speaking helpers interacted warmly with the Spanish-speaking Peruvian young people from Pueblo Libre Church, enriching the lives of all as a result.

OSA continues to have a significant Scottish influence. My brother-in-law John Gilmour is a retired doctor who, with his wife Karen, a nurse, lives in Kirriemuir. They, along with Jim Estill, a dentist from the same town, have been involved in OSA from the beginning and are influential advocates for this mission in their communities. Several Kirriemuir churches have adopted OSA as their mission project and in addition to financial support, the ladies of these churches have knitted clothes for the children of Collique.

Our dreams for increasing the social and spiritual impact of the OSA mission continue. We would like to start some educational vocational activities to help people with income producing projects. Eventually, we hope to construct a Clinic for primary medical care, with emphases on education and prevention.

After several months of prayerful discernment and preparation, Chris and Jess Rose and their young son Joshua moved to Collique to begin service as full-time missionaries for the OSA ministry. Both have previous experience living in Latin America. They will provide supplemental teaching to



*Dr Campos with a child wearing one of the knitted jumpers*

about 50 children who attend the OSA after-school program called 'Living Water-OSA.' Through this program, children are provided with a nutritious meal and have an opportunity to learn about Christ. Help with schoolwork, recreation, and crafts are also part of the daily activities. They are also teaching English and leading Bible study for adults in the community. Jess will soon begin leading a family enrichment course called Motherwise for women in the community. Help for new mothers in The Collique State Hospital has also been provided in the form of blankets and clothes for the newborn babies. It was good to be able to share the love of Christ with these mothers and to give them hope and peace that our Lord is with them always.

Our prayer is that He would continue to perform miracles in Collique, providing for the people in ways we could never imagine.

Ruth and I praise our Lord for the many blessings we have received in this ministry. Through this adventure we have grown spiritually, and our family has become more united. We have fellowship with wonderful Christians whom we did not know before, and have grown closer to friends we've known for a long time. We have observed the tremendous blessings that each volunteer in this mission has received, and the many lives that have been forever changed. Most importantly, as time progresses, we see improvements in the physical, mental, and spiritual health of the children and families with whom we work, and we pray that as we attempt to share the Love of God, these people will come to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ.

There is a pressing need for additional funds to support the ongoing programmes.

For more information please contact: Karen and John Gilmour: [karen-rgilmour@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:karen-rgilmour@hotmail.co.uk)

To Learn More About Operación San Andrés please visit [www.operacionsanandres.org](http://www.operacionsanandres.org)

# Evening Event in Stornoway

Thank you to **Hilary Morrison** for telling us about this evening, which was enjoyed by the ladies in the Western Isles.

Our second annual Evening Event for Women took place on 23 June 2008 in the M.A. Macleod Memorial Hall, Stornoway, when 150 women from WFM groups across the Western Isles (including three intrepid ladies from Uist) met together for an evening of fellowship and discussion. As with all such events, the opportunity to catch up with old friends and the chance to make new ones was much appreciated by everyone. With our WFM groups so spread out geographically, and some very small in number, it is very heartening to share a relaxing but thought-provoking time together.



Local committee members with Nan Ferguson and speakers; Marcella Macaulay and Irene Howat

The evening was opened by Nan Ferguson, who welcomed everyone, and especially our two guest speakers, Mrs Marcella Macaulay and Mrs Irene Howat. After grace was said by Dena Macleod, everyone enjoyed a lovely meal.

The main business of the evening got underway with everyone singing Psalm 148. Marion Rae Macsween then sang 'Sharon's Rose', and the purity of her voice, joined with the words of this song, moved everyone.

Our first speaker was Marcella Macaulay, who gave her testimony: a remarkable story, as are the uses to which the Lord has put her. She has a unique and entertaining style, and amused us with some of her first impressions of Lewis after coming from Chile and living with her father-in-law, known to her family as the "Bodach"!

After the singing of Psalm 34, Katie Macleod introduced us to the WFM 2008/9 Project, "**Health Matters**". Raising funds for the Project will be the focus for each WFM group. Money is needed for a new ambulance and steriliser for Lakhnadon Christian Hospital in India, for new toilet and shower facilities for summer camps in Romania, and to provide clean drinking water for a village in Peru. In past years, WFM have raised thousands of pounds towards similar projects, and doubtless

this will be the case this year too. We pray the Lord will bless our endeavours.

## It was an evening no one present would have wanted to miss.

A beautiful rendering of *Amazing Grace* by Marion Rae preceded the very moving and thought-provoking talk by Irene Howat. As our topic for the evening was 'Focus on Family', she spoke of the Christian's responsibilities as brothers and sisters, children, parents, wives and husbands, and our duties as members of the wider Christian family. We were challenged to 'pray without ceasing' for the children of our congregations, to nurture, care for, and love them. Irene reminded us that no Christian is alone and without a family, as they have been adopted into the whole Christian church through faith in Christ. Even our squabbles and disputes demonstrate our membership of a family, as every family has its quarrels. Irene has a way of speaking the truth with such love that no one who hears her can help but feel that they have heard the echo of the voice of the Lord, and leave with the determination to be a better Christian!

The formal part of the evening closed with the singing of Psalm 128, and Nan gave heartfelt thanks to our speakers. Over tea and coffee, the annual "networking" began, and everyone was free to catch up with old friends. An excellent sales and crafts stall was available, as was a bookstall for Christian Focus Publications. A great discount was on offer, and many of us took advantage of that - never ones to miss a retail opportunity!

I think I speak for everyone when I say that it was an evening no one present would have wanted to miss. Our grateful thanks go to the organising committee, the hardworking catering staff, and the obliging young waitresses, one of whom doubled as the entertainment! Our gratitude to the caretaker of the M.A. Memorial Hall is unbounded. But our very special thanks go to Marcella and Irene, who gave us such food for thought.

## Looking for ideas for your WFM group?

Why not use the Bible Study notes, *Making the most of every opportunity*, which can be downloaded from the church's website ([www.freechurch.org](http://www.freechurch.org)) by clicking on "Missions".

Alternatively, send for a copy from the Secretary:  
**Meg Millar, 11 Ferndown Gardens, Cobham, KT11 2BH**

### Students of Praise

'Mama, the doctor says I have cancer,' a young female student told me. Later, as we parted, I continued on my way to the study house, to check that the soup for the students' lunch hadn't burnt. On the way I met a group of students coming out of a lecture. 'Molo Mama,' one of them said, 'have you heard that two of the students have just got married?' Another Dumisani wedding! As I entered the building, another student told me that he had no money for food that night. I gave him a food packet, then stirred my soup. 'Mama,' yet another student said, coming through the door of the "boutique", 'can I buy these boots for my son?'

Just another day in Dumisani. A day where we feel so blessed to be part of it, where we are aware of the great privilege that has been given to us to serve.

Like most theological colleges, we are trying to equip students to do God's work. We are trying to help them progress not just academically, but spiritually, emotionally and physically. Like every other college, we have our own joys and problems, which are unique to our part of the world. So what is it like to be a student in Dumisani?



Jenny Wilson

**We are trying to equip students to do God's work. We are trying to help them progress not just academically, but spiritually, emotionally and physically.**

If you are in the Basic Ministry Studies group, you will attend class from Monday to Wednesday. If you are a degree student, you will attend classes between Tuesday and Thursday. Fridays are for study. The college opens at 8am (although in South Africa, as in the UK, not many students will be around at that time!) and closes at 7pm at night when the last lecture finishes. This means that part-time students who are working can attend.

When morning lectures finish at 1pm, the students make their way to the common room, where there is a meal waiting for them. It tends to be soup and bread, rice, or a pasta bake. For some of the students this is the only meal that they will eat in the day. This is a recent development in Dumisani. In the past, money has been given to the students to buy bread each day, but it has been decided that now we will make a nutritious meal for staff and students. Next to the kitchen is "the boutique", where second-hand clothes can be bought by the staff and students. The boutique is stocked by donations, run by one of the students, and the proceeds are used for a variety of small projects that support the student body.

At 3pm most days, the staff and students meet together for a time of worship. This is led by the lecturers, and all lectures start and close with prayer. The prayers can be in Xhosa, English or Afrikaans.

As exam time draws near and assignments are to be handed in, the number of students making their way to the library increases. The library consists of four rooms lined with books or journals, the librarian's office, and a study room. Sometimes local pastors also use the library.

When students have problems or issues to be discussed, they go to the administration block to talk to one of the academic staff or clerical staff. The problems that face the students are wide-ranging, from finding it hard to pay the fees to problems with studying, or issues surrounding accommodation or family traumas.

The Dumisani staff try to do all they can to help and support the students. It is a happy place to be. Laughter breaks out constantly as students meet their fellow students or members of staff. There is much chatter and sharing of news and ideas. On a sunny day, you will often find small groups of students sitting on the grass talking or discussing what they have learnt in lectures. Although the students learn in English, because the majority of them are Xhosa-speaking, most of their chat is in isiXhosa.

On warm evenings, the students often linger, talking to each other and to the lecturer about the content of the lecture. Many seem reluctant to leave, whilst others have to rush to catch a minibus taxi back to their village or location. It is not always the safest or the most comfortable way to travel. Some students travel quite far; others have managed to get accommodation closer to the college.

A couple of students who live in a small building at the back of the teaching block wait until the last student and staff member has gone, and then lock up the lecture hall and the car park gates.

As the sun sets on another day in Dumisani, we rejoice that 'the voice of prayer is never silent, nor dies the strain of praise away'. And as Dumisani (which is the command to "praise" in isiXhosa) closes, we sleep knowing that throughout the world, God's praise is continuing. Many other students are waking and learning more of God's love and God's plan for their lives. Many other students are being equipped to teach others about God's greatness. And we pray that in God's providence, we too will wake up to another day where Dumisani will not just be the name of a college, but a command followed by all who come within its doors.

**New Arrivals at the Free Church Bookshop**



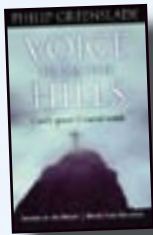
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*'As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you.'* **1 Samuel 12: 23**

- Wed 1** A Messianic Fellowship Meeting with a Jewish New Year theme, 'The Books were Opened', preceded by a Jewish believer's testimony, is to be held on Saturday in Newton Mearns. Please pray that Jewish friends will come.
- Thur 2** The Big Free Rally will be held this Saturday, 4 October, in Culloden Academy. The theme is 'The One and Only' and speakers are Rev D. G. Macdonald (Prim) and Dr Colin Dow (Sec). Please pray for all the young folk who will attend.
- Fri 3** A 'Highland Youth Weekend' for Secs 3 – 6 will be held in Kilravock from 3–5 Oct. The main speaker will be Rev Derek Lamont. His theme: 'Only dead fish go with the flow!' Please pray for Susan Maclean, organising this and the Rally (which will be part of the programme), and for all the team.
- Sat 4** The first Part-time Course for this session, leading to a Certificate in Theology or a Diploma in Christian Studies, will be held in the Free Church College today, with connections to Stornoway and Smithton, Inverness. The Courses will be *Introducing the New Testament*, by Prof J A Macleod, *Communicating the Gospel Today* by Rev Alex Macdonald, and *The Cross of Christ* by Prof Donald Macleod. Please pray.
- Sun 5** Praise the Lord with the congregation of North Uist as they meet for worship today with their new pastor, Rev Ewen Matheson, and his wife Donna. Ask the Lord to greatly bless the new ministry and the whole congregation.
- Mon 6** Thurso Church will be holding a 'Reminiscences Afternoon' today for folk in the church and community. Please pray for this event and for each person who attends.
- Tue 7** Remember the North Uist congregation as they hope to build a new church. Pray that they will raise sufficient funds, that as they unite in this project they will all be strengthened in the Lord, and that His Name would be blessed in the community.
- Wed 8** Remember Rev Ken Hunter and his wife Marge as they begin their retirement in Rogart. Pray that the Lord will continue to use and bless their ministry in a different setting.
- Thur 9** Pray too for the congregation of Brora who will greatly miss their pastor and who now will wonder what the future holds for them. Ask the Lord to guide and encourage each of them.
- Fri 10** A Western Isles Presbytery camp is to be held at Scaladale Centre, Harris, for young folk of P7 – S2 age, from today till Tuesday 14th. Pray for each camper and leader, and for Kenny Smith as he organises the camp.
- Sat 11** Pray for Stan Gowdy, as his work as Alcohol Outreach Worker now includes Lewis and Harris as well as Uist. Pray that this joint project between the Western Isles Presbytery and the Caladh Trust will prosper.
- Sun 12** Communion services will be held today in Callanish, Cross and Gairloch congregations. Please pray for the Lord's company to be with each of the ministers, members and adherents.
- Mon 13** Rev Colin Macleod, chaplain to our Forces in Afghanistan, is due to finish there about now. He and the troops on the front have been very grateful for our prayers, especially on tough days. Continue to pray for other chaplains and all the forces.
- Tue 14** Partick congregation have been continuing with their 'Drop-In' venture and have been encouraged that folks have come back and have appreciated the help they have received. Please pray that the Lord will grant spiritual fruit from this venture.

**Wed 15** Thurso congregation are running a Christianity Explored Course. It will be meeting in the manse this afternoon. Please pray for all those attending and for the Lord to bless it, and that it may make an impact on the life of the congregation.

**Thur 16** There is a 7-week "Two ways to live" course (started early Oct) meeting tonight in St Vincent St congregation, Glasgow. Pray for this event, that it might be a way for those who attend to come to trust in the way of the Lord.

**Fri 17** The G2 Youth Group are due to meet in Glasgow tonight. Please pray for these young people and leaders, and ask that they may not be drawn into a lifestyle that would harm them.

*If you have any requests for prayer or praise for the December Prayer Diary, please send them now to Elizabeth Graham: tel 0131 336 4071, or e-mail: w.d.graham@btinternet.com*

**Sat 18** In Thurso there is a fortnightly Sunday evening meeting in various homes for High School students in the congregation, which they enjoy. Pray for all involved.

**Sun 19** The congregations of Burghead, Gravir and Greenock will be holding Communion services today. May the Lord who promised to bless even twos and threes be there Himself today.

**Mon 20** Pray for the congregation in Arran and for their minister and his wife, David and Shirley Karoon. They have recently started a Prayer Meeting. Pray for all the various concerns there.

**Tue 21** The Northern Presbytery will meet in Brora today. They will probably have much to discuss. Pray for a time of fellowship together and for guidance and wisdom.

**Wed 22** Remember the Vacancy Committee in Dumfries as it recommences its efforts to find a minister. Some of the members are ill. Pray for them all.

**Thur 23** Several Children's Clubs meet today in the Skye and Wester Ross Presbytery. Please pray for children and leaders.

**Fri 24** The Glasgow United Youth Fellowship is due to meet today in St Vincent Street church. Pray that they will enjoy meeting folk from other Free Church congregations in the city.

**Sat 25** All over the church, Sunday School teachers will be preparing their lessons for tomorrow. Pray for them and for the children who will gather to learn. They are the future Free Church.

**Sun 26** Ayr, Dunblane, Partick, Point and Resolis will be gathering round the Lord's Table today. Please pray for great blessing.

**Mon 27** Dr Graham Keith, Ayr, represents the Free Church on the Scottish Joint Committee for Religious and Moral Education. He will need the prayers of the Church and the Lord's wisdom.

**Tue 28** Several Presbyteries meet tonight. Pray for them all as they meet together in fellowship and for all decisions to be made.

**Wed 29** Ministers and Youth Workers, especially in the North and West, have regular lessons in schools. Pray that they may make the most of this wonderful opportunity to bring the Gospel to young people, for whom this may be their only contact with the Lord.

**Thur 30** Campbeltown/Tarbert congregation have lost their two elders in just over a year. Please pray earnestly that the devil would not discourage the members and that the Lord would provide new, younger men who could fill the gaps left by these good men.

**Fri 31** Remember our Free Church in Leverburgh, Harris, and the minister, Rev Ruairidh MacLean. There are many opportunities there. May the Lord prosper them all.

## Letter to *The Monthly Record* in response to criticism of book review

Dear David

I am responding to Mike Moore and John Duncan Fitzpatrick, who wrote (in the August edition) about my review of Stephen Sizer's book, *Zion's Christian Soldiers*.

A protocol that exists among academics holding different views about the future is a mutual respect for the 'scholarly and evangelical productivity of one another' (O. Palmer Robertson). So while I sympathise with John Duncan's strength of feeling – I feel equally strongly, but in the opposite direction – his language ('gross distortion') is unacceptable.

I have read through Mike's correspondence with great interest. I think everything he says and challenges Stephen Sizer about relates not to Stephen's covenantal theology but his attitude to Israel, and by and large Stephen has given very reasonable answers. I thought Stephen's book made the theological issues accessible, and I enjoyed it so much that I wanted to share knowledge of its existence. I still recommend it. He says relatively little about current events in Israel.

There are three reasons I cannot believe that the State of Israel is a fulfilment of biblical prophecies.

Firstly, the State was formed by taking land from another people against their will. The injustices of 1948, exacerbated enormously by events since, mean I am asked to believe that God has fulfilled His prophecy by the commission of grievous sins. The Old Testament has very strong teaching about the theft of land and the treatment of aliens, teaching which Israel ignores and violates. Of course Jews also have had injustices aplenty, and dismantling Israel creates more problems than it solves. But the start to a solution in the Middle East will require honesty, and currently that is in short supply.

Secondly, I depend on others to guide me in understanding the Scriptures: giants such as Louis Berkhof and Wm. Hendriksen, who are clear in rejecting such restricted views of prophecy.

Thirdly, when I compare what is written on each point of view, I am drawn to the language of the one and repelled by the other. The one glories in Christ and His present and future kingship. The other glories in a land, fails to adequately explain Old Testament prophecy in the light of New Testament teaching, and never seems to see beyond the Second Coming. For me, every promise is fulfilled for us, now or in eternity, when we are "in Christ," who by his cross and resurrection broke not only the bonds of death ... but also the bonds of the land' (W. D. Davies).

Yours sincerely

**Iain Gill**

## Responding to John Ross

Dear David,

We are writing in response to John Ross's letter in the September *Record* concerning reactions to Dr McGowan's recent book on scripture.

We heartily agree with John that gossip, name-calling, knee-jerk reactions, and distortions of the book's argument should not be countenanced in Christian circles; and that those who argue on the basis of guilt by association are acting in a disreputable way. There are, however, a number of concerns to which the letter gives rise.

First, John never names those whom he regards as reacting inappropriately to the book; nor does he provide any specific examples of what he finds so distressing. It would seem basic to the ninth commandment and to the law of love (both of which he cites) to have done precisely these things in order not to seem vulnerable to the very charge he makes against others, particularly given the extremity of language he uses (e.g., critics/criticisms of Dr. McGowan are variously 'ludicrous,' 'unfair,' 'deplorable,' 'risible'). As his letter stands, it leaves a cloud of suspicion over exactly who is and who is not indicted by his strong words. This is inappropriate.

Second, John himself seems in his final paragraph to lay out the boundaries of what he considers to be legitimate criticism. The book can apparently be considered untimely or terminologically debatable; but the implication is that any further, deeper criticism is off-limits. Given the very serious questions that have been very graciously raised about the book by numerous reputable and thoughtful churchmen such as Iain D Campbell, John Frame, Rowland Ward, John R DeWitt, and Peter Barnes, the issues are surely more significant than matters of mere timeliness or infelicitous terminological innovation.

Third, we do not know to what extent John was privy to any discussions that may have gone on behind the scenes regarding cancellation of lecture tours for Dr McGowan; but it seems something of a polemical/logical leap to interpret decisive public action as 'knee-jerk' reaction unless one has actually been privy to such discussions or spoken to those involved. John needs to be specific and to provide evidence for these very serious accusations against fellow Christians or withdraw the remarks immediately; otherwise he would appear to be indulging in the very kind of counter-productive mud-slinging polemic which he himself so rightfully deplors.

We also wish to express our hearty 'Amen!' to John's plea for the affirmation of essential evangelical unity; but in a day when evangelicals are apparently comfortable with training women for the ordained ministry, question classic Protestant doctrines such as justification, and now cannot even agree on the nature and authority of scripture, we are left asking who it is who is really putting this unity under strain; indeed, we even wonder in what exactly this essential unity is now considered to consist.

As people involved in the task of theological education ourselves, we recognize that theological teachers have an awesome trust, for which they will be held accountable in the hereafter. Given their huge impact on the churches here and now, they should also be held to account now by those responsible for the well-being of Christ's flock. While polemical engagement must of course always be done in a way that honours Christ, to undercut appropriate theological vigilance through appeals to grace simply will not do. Tough stands are never nice, never popular, but frequently they are very necessary. The books from evangelicals redefining scripture and hitting inerrancy are coming thick and fast. We submit that the debate is not about timeliness or terminology; it is about the nature and authority of scripture, a point on which Dr McGowan is himself very clear in his book; we should be no less clear in our responses to his arguments.

Yours sincerely,

**Carl R Trueman, Vice President**  
**Sandy Finlayson, Library Director**  
**Westminster Theological Seminary, PA.**

## Inerrant or Faithful?

Dear David,

As a sympathetic observer outside the Free Church tradition, I hope you will not think it impertinent of me to venture a view on the recent discussion in these columns about the appropriateness of the terms 'infallible' and 'inerrant' in respect of Holy Scripture.

I tend to recoil at the use of such terms to apply either to the Bible or to the Church. My main objection is that both terms begin with a negating prefix. They tell us what scripture isn't! I prefer more positive terms like 'faithful,' 'dependable,' 'reliable' and 'trustworthy'.

As surely as we like to think of our friends and teachers as reliable and trustworthy, rather than inerrant or infallible, is it not preferable to consider God and His Word in like manner? Eliminative negatives tell us only what Scripture isn't: affirmative positives tell us what Scripture is!

Is that not more important?

Yours sincerely,

**Dan O'Hara**

## Iain D Campbell responds...

Dear David,

My writings do not usually give rise to a page full of critical comment in the Monthly Record, so when they do, I should really respond.

The publication of *The Divine Spiration of Scripture* has sent ripples of unease throughout the Reformed world. The author's argument that we must not rest the reliability of Scripture on 'inerrant autographic text' (p211) is at the heart of that tension; many of us are simply not willing to concede his position that the concept of inerrancy is not a biblical doctrine but a rationalistic position forged in the heat of battle over fundamentalism.

I appreciate Hector Morrison's concern to defend his colleague against criticism, but I can assure him that my review was not only written with care, but also submitted for comment to other scholars prior to publication. And while I am not (obviously) one of the faceless polemicists to whom John Ross refers, it is surely not a matter of small concern that long established and highly respected Reformed institutions have given such unprecedented expression to their disquiet.

Perhaps one of the issues we ought to assert with confidence in this discussion is that the autographa of Scripture are not lost on us: we possess them in the texts we have, in which no variant reading challenges any fundamental biblical doctrine. Most of the variants, as evangelical scholars would assert, are easy to spot as copyist errors.

I am all for evangelical unity; but I cannot see what evangelicals gain by abandoning the concept of an inerrant Bible. If this is merely a semantical issue, we have been hugely distracted from our evangelistic and missionary calling; if it is more than that, we have undermined our confessional position on the nature of the Word of God. I don't think Professor McGowan wants to do either; but nor do I think he has helped evangelicals to define what their position on Scripture actually is.

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## Read Ecclesiastes 12

In this *Record* we have been reflecting upon the work of the Gospel amongst students. One of the most relevant books of the Bible for our young people today is the book of Ecclesiastes, as Solomon reflects upon the meaninglessness, and the meaning, of life. In this last chapter he turns toward the question of death. The young are told to remember their Creator whilst they are still young, before old age and death comes.

Verses 1-5 describe what it is like to grow old, with a fading body, sensual decline, increasing fears, and the loss of joie de vivre.

Verses 6-7 then use two metaphors to describe death. The golden bowl is tied to a silver cord. When that cord is cut, the bowl shatters. The pitcher is lowered into the well until the wheel breaks, and it falls and is also shattered. The water of life spills out. Youth is fleeting, life is fragile, and death is certain. It is little wonder that Solomon declares that 'under the sun' everything is meaningless.

Verses 9-14 – But not everything is 'under the sun'. These verses are a classic and traditional summary of what life is about. Life is about learning. And not just when we are young. We are all to be lifelong students. Moses, David, Ezra, and of course Jesus and the apostles, were teachers. They sought just the right words to communicate truth to us. Ultimately, all learning is given to us by the One Shepherd. And we are to beware of anything added to that knowledge. 'I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book (Revelation 22:18, NIV).'

The making of many books. If that was true in Solomon's day, it is even more so in ours. Around 200,000 books were published in Britain last year. The World Wide Web has given us easy access to information beyond our wildest dreams. But who can study or know it all? Aside from which, the physical effort of studying everything is impossible. The danger is that we develop the Wikipedia attitude to knowledge – we have lots of instant information, and very little learning, wisdom, thought and reflection.

Without God, life ultimately has no meaning or purpose. With Him, it is full of richness. Even death has a meaning and a purpose. We are made whole when we come to know God. We come to understand that every deed will be brought into judgement, that everything is known, and most of all that we are known by, and can know, the living God through His Son Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life.